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ART. XII. *Versuch über die maltesische Sprache zur Beurtheilung der neulich wiederholten Behauptung, dass sie ein Ueberrest der altpunischen sey, und als Beyirag zur arabischen Dialectologie.*—*Essay upon the Maltese language; by way of examination of the hypothesis lately revived, that it is a relic of the ancient punic language, and of contribution to Arabic dialectology, by Dr. William Gesenius, Professor in the Gymnasium of Heiligenstadt. Leipsic, 12mo, 1810.*

THE people of Malta are a distinct race from the other inhabitants of Europe. The common peasantry of the island speak a dialect having considerable affinity to the Hebrew, and of course belonging to what are called *Semitic* languages. The languages comprehended under the denomination of *Semitic* are the Hebrew, Chaldaic or East Aramean, Syriac or West Aramean, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Samaritan. The Phœnician may be considered as a seventh branch of this stock. These dialects bear about the same relation to each other, that the German does to the Dutch, or the Spanish to the Portuguese. Many of these dialects, it will be seen, are highly interesting on account of the people who spoke them, and the monuments of ancient literature which they contain. Two of them, the Hebrew and Arabic, contain the depositories of religion, for a considerable portion of the globe. The name itself, *Semitic*, we scarce need add, is derived from that of the eldest son of Noah, the reputed ancestor of the nations, by whom the languages mentioned were spoken.

As the Phœnicians, who were neighbours of the Hebrews
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and spoke a kindred dialect, visited Malta at a very early period, and sent colonies thither, and were afterwards succeeded by the Carthaginians, who originated from Phenicia, an opinion very naturally suggested itself to the learned, that the present Maltese tongue might, in fact, be the remains of the ancient Phenician, and, what is nearly the same, the old Carthaginian or Punic. The supposition was very plausible in itself, and promised results highly gratifying to the literary world. The Phenicians were perhaps the first among cultivated nations. They were an enlightened, commercial, opulent, and literary people, when the rest of the world were hardly acquainted with alphabetical writing. Every thing pertaining to their history and their language has interested the historian of antiquity and the philologist. But the monuments of this people are few and scattered.

Dr. Bellermann, the learned director of the Berlin-Cologne Gymnasium, who has devoted perhaps as much time to the study of the Phenician remains, as any living scholar, recommends, in the first of a series of programs on this subject, published in 1812, the formation of what he calls a *Thesaurus phœnicio-punicus*, intended as an imitation of the works of Gronovius and Grævius, and to contain all that we have of Phenician Antiquity, and all that has been written in illustration of it.—But in the very proposal of the work, he betrays the scantiness of the materials, which are to fill it, as far as they are to consist of remains of the Phenician language, to which scantiness of materials, the abundance of the commentaries on them, as is usual in the learned world, stands in inverse ratio. As the Program of Dr. Bellermann is rarely met with out of Germany, we venture to translate the following long passage from it, for the benefit of such of our readers as are keenly interested in the native language of Cadmus and Hannibal, and who may wish to know, in brief, what remains to us of this language, and to what degree it has attracted the attention of modern scholars.

‘The *Thesaurus pœnicio punicus*,’ says the doctor, ‘should, in my opinion, contain 1. The sources, 2. The ancient accounts, 3. The modern labours upon these materials. There should, therefore, be collected all the *inscriptions* in the Phœnico-punic character, which have been discovered on marble, stone, metal, or vases. I reckon of such inscriptions, at present, forty five, which

have been found at Citium in Cyprus, in Crete, in Malta, in Gozzo, in Gaulos, at Palermo and Carpentras in Sicily, at Athens, at Palmyra, and in Africa itself, and published by Pococke, Wood, d'Orville, Rigord, Prince de Torre Muzza, Akerblad, &c.

[We trust the learned doctor does not mean to exclude from his Thesaurus the inscription on our own Dighton rock, which we have no doubt has as good right to be included as some of the forty five; and which, if some means be not speedily taken by the friends of American Antiquity to remove it from its present exposed situation, will, before long, be quite worn away by the river.]

'To these should be added a considerable, though not yet ascertained number of *coins*. They may be conveniently divided into three classes, viz. such as have a purely Phenician or punic legend; secondly, such as, besides such a legend, have a Greek or Roman one connected with it, as the names, for instance, of Alexander, of Juha, and of Roman Emperors; thirdly, such as have no inscriptions. All the coins hereto appertaining should be, in like manner, critically copied from Paruta, Velasquez, d'Orville, Swinton, Haym, Dutens, de Boze, Barthelemy, Pellerin, and P. Bayer. Whether imitated in copper plate, lithography, or wood cuts, the greatest care should be had, to copy exactly the forms of the letters.

'In the second place, the Thesaurus phœnicio-punicus ought to contain every thing of their *writings*, which has come down to us from antiquity. Although the works of the national Phenician authors, of the learned priest Sanconiathon of Berytus, of the Carthaginian Mago, called by Strabo Mochas and by others Mochus (the author of twenty eight books on Agriculture, according to Pliny, which were translated from Punic into Greek, by Dionysius of Utica, and reduced into a compend of six books by Diophanes of Bithynia, who in that state presented them to king Deiotarus) of Chæus, Chætus or Lætus, of Asitus, of Hæstiaëus, of Theodotus, of Hysikrates, (a Greek name which, as well as the termination *us* of the foregoing names, was imposed by foreigners,) of the navigator Hanno, and of Philo Byblius,—although these works are lost in their originals, we possess, nevertheless, precious fragments of some of them in Greek and Latin translations in Eusebius, Augustin, Porphyry of Tyre, and Photius; as we have also specimens of the Punic preserved, in Latin characters, in Plautus, and several phenico-punic words in other ancient authors. For the sake of brevity, I refer here to my three programs, entitled "An Attempt to explain the punic passages in Plautus," Berlin, 1806, 1807, 1808—to My program Phœnicicæ

linguæ vestigiorum in Melitensi specimen, 1809. (Some of the opinions contained in which I now retract, having changed my convictions since,) and my program de Phœnicum et Pœnorum inscriptionibus, 1810.

‘It will be necessary to the completeness of this work that the passages of the ancients, particularly of the Greeks, Romans, Arabians, and Syrians relative to this subject, should be extracted and thrown together:

‘Thirdly, every thing of importance which has been written by scholars in modern times, by way of *illustration* of this subject, should be incorporated into the Thesaurus. To make the enumeration with respect to Phenician Coins alone, the literary history of which is so imperfectly given in the otherwise excellent work of Meusel, Bibliotheca historica II. 14. the labours of the Spanish Scholars in this department are particularly rich in materials. For instance, Bernardo Aldrete Varios antiguedades, &c. 1614; Vinc. J. de Lastanosa; Velasquez; Heuriquez Florez, Metallas de los Colonies Madrid, 1758—73; Francis Perez Bayer del Alfabeto y lengua de los Fenices, in the Sallust of the Infant, Madrid 1772, fol.

‘Among the Italian literati should be included Phil. Paruta, with the commentaries of Leon, Augustin, Golz, and Havercamp; Ridolfino Venuti; Gabr. L. Castellus or Prencipe de Torre Muzza (Thes. Sic.) Georgio Gualteri, and Vincenz. Mirabella in his Antiche Siracuse.

‘Of the French there are Vaillant, Jean Clerc, Jaquez de Bary, Bochart, Claude Gros de Boze, Mignot, Fabricy a Frenchman settled in Rome, and Sylvestre de Sacy.

‘Of the English, John Swinton, of whom we have twenty seven scattered, and in part very rare essays on this subject, Chandler, Pembroke, Pococke, Norris and Haym.

‘Of the Swedes, Akerblad in the Actis Gœtting.

‘Of the Danes, Norberg and Zoega.

‘Of the Dutch, Erasmus, Havercamp, d’Orville, and Burmann, the editor of the Thesaurus Siculus.

‘The German Scholars have not been behind hand in this quarter, though less favoured in local circumstances than the Spanish, French, and Italians. The Thesaurus should contain what has been written in this way by J. J. Gessner, Reinesius of Gotha, Rhenferd of Westphalia, Frœlich, C. S. Liebe, U. von Lingen, C. Hendreich, J. M. Weinrich, J. D. Michaelis, Niebuhr, O. L. and T. C. Tychsel, Eichhorn, Bruns, Lorsbach, Lichtentstein, Vater, Gesenius, and Anton.’—*Bemerkungen ueber die phœnizischen und punischen Muenzen. Erstes Stueck*, p. 32—34.

Our readers will readily see that, behind all this pompous array of materials for a Phenician Thesaurus, the amount of what remains to us of this tongue is inconsiderable. It becomes, therefore, a question of no small interest, whether the ruins of this language are yet to be found in the interior of Malta. Can we still, from a living and spoken language, enlarge, almost at pleasure, our scanty vocabulary of the ancient Phenician tongue? If so, the solution of the Punic riddle in Plautus is near at hand. But this is of secondary consequence. Should the Phenician be found nearly identical with the Hebrew, the discovery would be of vast importance to sacred literature and the study of the Old Testament. Should it be found to hold a more distant relation to the sacred language, still this new branch of the Semitic stock of languages would throw light on all the rest, and be of great assistance to the biblical student.

Among the writers, who have defended the opinion that the Maltese language is of Punic origin, are John Quintin of Autun in France, in a *descriptio Insulæ Melitæ*, inserted in Grævii *Thesaurus Siculus*; John May, a Lutheran divine and professor of Oriental languages at Giessen in Hesse Darmstadt, in his *specimina linguæ punicæ*, in *hodiernâ Melitensium superstite*; and G. P. Franc. Agius de Soldanis, in his work *della lingua punica, presentamente usata da Maltesi ovvero Nuovi documenti, li quali possono servire di lume all' antica lingua Etrusca*. In Roma 1750, 8vo. Prof. Adelung, however, whose labours have contributed so much to the knowledge of universal language, rejected this opinion in his *Mithridates*; but the nature and extent of his work did not permit him to give a full statement of his reasons. The high authority of Adelung did not therefore quiet the wishes of the learned, nor prevent Dr. Bellermann from again proposing and defending the old opinion in a Program already mentioned, entitled *Phœniciæ linguæ vestigiorum in Melitensi Specimen I*. Berolini, 1809. This work contains an extensive list of Maltese words, each of which the author traces back to a Hebræo-Phenician origin, and was the immediate occasion of the essay of Dr. Gesenius. Dr. Gesenius, at the time of the publication of the work before us, professor of the Gymnasium at Heiligenstadt, a small Prussian city, is now well known to our readers as professor at the University of Halle, and author of the most valuable Hebrew Lexicon

which we possess. Thinking that the learning and celebrity of Dr. Bellermann might give currency to what he considered a false and unfounded opinion, in regard to the Maltese language, he published the essay before us ; and it is probably this essay, which produced that change in Dr. Bellermann's convictions, which the doctor himself has the candor to acknowledge, in the extract we have given above.

Malta was under the power of the Arabs or Saracens from A. D. 870 to 1090 ; and intercourse was kept up with that people for some time afterwards. The ease, with which these historical circumstances would account for the similarity of Maltese to the Semitic dialects, seems by Quintin and his followers either to have been entirely overlooked ; or it was taken for granted that the language of the country, especially of the interior, was not much affected by the invasion of the Arabs. This is the view taken by Dr. Bellermann of this subject. But the Arabic names of places in Malta, as well as the testimony of historians, show that the Arabians penetrated the interior. See Abela *Malta illustrata*, edit. Ciantar. Malta, 1272, I. 681, &c. Others hold that, admitting the basis of the language to be Arabic, there are nevertheless several Phenician words, which have been preserved in it. This was the opinion of May. The learned essay of Gesenius, in which he has compared the Maltese tongue throughout, as to its words, forms, inflections, and constructions, with the Semetic dialects, and especially with that species of common Arabic which is now spoken by the Moors and Moroccaners, has fairly met and answered each of these different theories, and also given a general view of the peculiarities of the Maltese tongue. The essay contains a preface, giving a view of the controversy concerning the Maltese language, sixteen pages ; section I. Grammatical peculiarities of the dialect, twenty six pages ; section II. Maltese extracts, with an analysis of each word, sixteen pages ; and section III. a register of Maltese words with their explanations, thirty pages. No reader, it is believed, can avoid coming to the conclusion of the author, that the Maltese is nearly common Arabic, with some peculiarities of its own, particularly the intermixture of Italian words ; and that it has no relation to the Phenician or Hebrew, beyond the general affinity of the Arabic to those languages.

The following observations, drawn principally from the

essay before us, will exhibit the peculiarities of the language, and at the same time enable the reader to judge of the point at issue between the author and Dr. Bellermann.

1. The Maltese language contains some occidental words. The same is the case, though in a less degree, with common Arabic. The occidental words adopted into the Maltese are all of Italian origin. This arises from the intercourse, which the inhabitants have had with Italy, and from Italian being spoken in the cities on the island. For the most part, however, the oriental expressions are also retained, and the corruption arising from this source has been overrated. In one specimen of the Lord's prayer, in Maltese, we meet with *nom* name, *volunta* will, *tentationi* temptation, *malo* evil, etc. which are evidently Italian. But in two other specimens of the same prayer we meet only one word of this kind. Sometimes these occidental words have the oriental preformatives and suffixes, and present a very singular appearance. Thus in *liberana*, (deliver us,) *na* is the first person plural pronominal suffix; in *yeruinnah* (he will destroy him) *ye* is the preformative of the third person singular of the future, and *nah* is the third person singular, pronominal suffix. As to the opinion of Agius, expressed in the work of which we have already given the title, that some Maltese words are derived from the ancient Tuscan, it is, like most of the popular opinions of the Italian scholars on the subject of Etruscan antiquities, perfectly fanciful. To this subject, which yields to no branch of antiquity in interest, we hope before long to have an opportunity of calling the attention of our readers, and of presenting them with an examination of the celebrated work of Lanzi on the Etruscan language. Bayer suggested the question whether there were not some German words intermingled, and this was repeated by Michaelis (*Orient. Biblioth. Th. vi. s. 116.*) and also by Adelung (*Mithrid. Th. I. s. 415.*) But the Maltese word *ard* or *art* (signifying earth,) from which this opinion arose, is as easily derived from the Arabic *arts*, as from the German *erde*. In fact, if we adopt the somewhat alarming theory of Dr. Whiter in his *Etymologicum*, this same element, *arts*, is the root, not only of the words which resemble it in other languages, but of all the words, in all the languages; the one universal mother element, with which the human organs began, in their effort to express thoughts by sounds, and out of which all language has suc-

cessively grown. With respect to the resemblance of the Maltese and German, it is a well known fact, that a few words pervade almost all languages, in forms nearly identical. They are borne, like seeds by birds, by travellers and traders, and often start up and show themselves, where you would least expect them. In the case of the Maltese, it is evident that the few occidental words it contains have no influence on the question of its Phenician or Arabic origin.

2. Some words have been incorrectly traced to a Hebrew-Phenician origin, by Bellermann, and much more by his predecessors, from an imperfect knowledge of the Hebrew, and from not attending to the meaning of the Maltese words under investigation. Thus *donni*, signifying in Maltese *it appears to me*, is compared by Bellermann with the Hebrew אדוני (adoni) which signifies *my Lord*. The Maltese *tal* compounded of *ta*, the sign of the genitive, and *al*, the article, Bellermann identifies with the rabbinical שֶׁל (shel.) Baalsamen, which corresponds very well with the Hebrew, is not a Maltese word, as Bellermann supposes.

3. The body of the language is common Arabic, and compares, with very great exactness, with the dialect of the Moors and Moroccans. Like this dialect, it has many words, which are also Hebrew; as *ach* brother, *Alla* God, *Baal* Lord, *ben* son, *samen* heaven. But such words, which are common to all the Semitic dialects, cannot prove that the language of Malta is Punic, in contradistinction from the other dialects. Many Maltese words on the contrary are found in Arabic and in Arabic only.

4. For some words, we can discover neither occidental, nor Hebrew, nor Arabic analogy. The reason of this may be, that the words are corrupted and disguised by being written in the Roman character, by those who have collected them, the Maltese themselves never writing their language; or that our Lexicons of modern Arabic are imperfect, and do not contain the whole language; or that such words are provincialisms, which the Saracens brought with them into Malta, or which have been adopted since. Instances of this kind do not affect the question concerning the identity of Maltese and Punic.

We attach great importance to the second of these suggestions. Our vocabularies of the vulgar Arabic are no doubt extremely imperfect. We are not without hopes, that something

may be done to supply this deficiency, from the papers of the unfortunate Burkhardt, bequeathed by that distinguished traveller to the University of Cambridge in England. Still more were to be hoped, from the publication of a modern Arabic lexicon, now existing in manuscript in the archives of the Moravians at Hernhut, which has been described to us as a quarto volume of the usual size, *and as thick as it is square*. This lexicon was copied by the indefatigable and lamented Röntgen before his departure for Africa on that voyage of forlorn hope, upon which so many high-minded travellers have started like him never to return.

5. There remain a few words and inflections, which are not found in Arabic, so far as it is known at present, but which are analogous to words in some other Semitic dialects. Thus there is one word resembling the Samaritan; another, the Ethiopic. The termination of 2 pers. sing. of the preterite tense in *kaph* corresponds exactly to the Ethiopic. The pronouncing of the first consonant of words without a vowel is more like the Syriac and Chaldaic, than like the Arabic. Maltese resembles the Syriac in giving to the initial *jod* the sound of *i*, as *icun* instead *yacun*; also in the termination of the dual and plural of nouns, and in the sign of the genitive case. The Maltese 5th conjugation resembles the Hebrew *hithpahel* more than the 5th conjugation of the Arabic. The preposition *ghal* is more like the Hebrew *ל* than the Arabic *ب*. The copulative conjunction is sounded *u* like the Hebrew. But no inference can be made from such instances, that there existed a close and immediate connexion with any of these dialects. These are words and forms, which belonged to the common store of the Semitic languages; and, though no longer extant in written Arabic, are yet preserved in the common pronunciation of that language. Other branches of common Arabic present just such appearances. Thus *chabir* in ancient Arabic signified *skilful*, but in the present dialect of Yemen it signifies *a companion*, the very meaning which it had in ancient Hebrew. And in the same way many vulgarisms of the English language, which never appear in writing, may be supported by analogy from the German, and some peculiarities in the popular language of Crete and Tarentum may boast of classical origin.

With regard to the Punic language, it is a singular circumstance that a Latin proverb, said by St. Augustin (*Serm.*

xiv.) to be of Punic origin, is now found to exist in the Maltese language; and a word is found in Maltese, denoting a *fisher*, consisting of the same radicals as the Phenician name of Sidon, which Justin tells us denoted a *fish*. But the same root is found in some of the other dialects also.

The author cannot be too much commended for the learning and talents displayed in this little work. It evinces the same nice discrimination and spirit of thorough investigation, which appear in all his grammatical and lexicographical works.

It is worthy of notice that *jim*, the third letter of the Arabic alphabet, which in ancient Arabic had the sound of the English *j*, has, according to Gesenius, in Maltese as well as Egyptian Arabic, the sound of *g* hard. The Moroccans give it both sounds. These facts favour the Masoretic distinction of two sounds in the Hebrew *gimel*, and render it highly probable that the modern Greeks are correct in giving both a hard and soft sound to the Greek *gamma*.

Gesenius also remarks that Vallancey, in his *Essay on the Antiquity of the Irish language*, *Dubl.* 1772, took for granted that Maltese was the same with ancient Punic, and compared the Irish with it. If any analogy were discovered, it would prove that the Irish was identical with the Arabic, not with the Punic. But though his *dreams*, to use Gesenius' expression, are hardly worth mentioning, yet we will give one instance of his fanciful and visionary mode of arguing. The Maltese *Alla ibiereg*, in which an oriental scholar will immediately recognize אלה יברך, *God shall bless*, Vallancey thinks to be the Irish *Lull beira dhuit*, *mayest thou do penance*. Vallancey's theory of the similarity of Irish and Phenician has been ably refuted by Michaelis (*Orient. Biblioth.* Th. iv. s. 116) Adelung (*Mithrid.* Th. 1. s. 415.) and by many others.

We trust no apology need be made for having detained our readers a little while on a subject, too dry for general interest. The connexion of languages is one of the few means we have of supplying the defects of ancient history, and of tracing the march of nations from region to region. In a future number of our journal, we propose to examine the pretensions of the dialect now spoken by the Sette Comuni, near Vicenza in Italy, to be considered as the relic of the language of the Cimbri; and to trace the connexion of the modern language of Wallachia with the Latin brought there by the ancient Roman colonists.